NOREX Quick Poll 2319   COVID-19: Workforce Next Steps
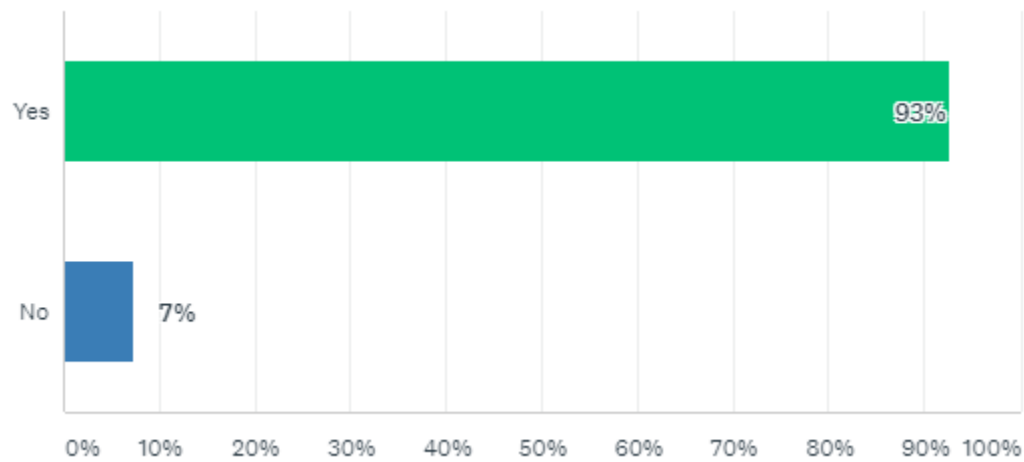
In April 2020, over 200 NOREX members responded to a poll on workforce next steps in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. Topics covered are when to bring employees back to the office, what measures will you deploy, and lessons learned and best practices implemented during the pandemic.
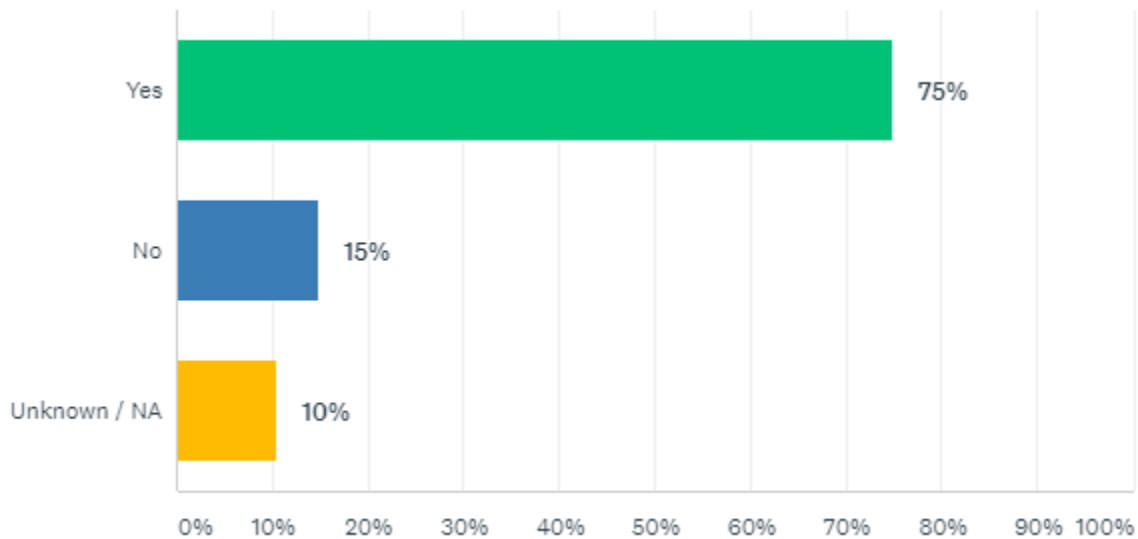
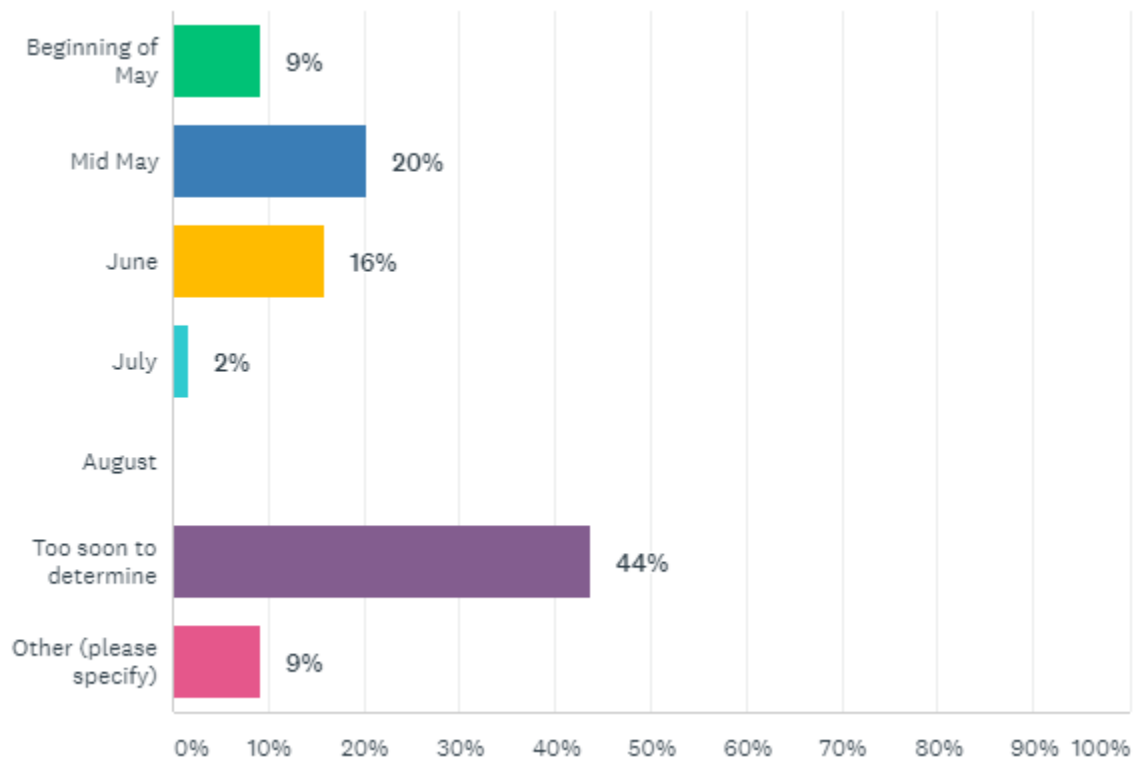(For a breakout by Industry or Region, please contact your Member Success Manager.)

Has your organization been required to have employees work from home due to COVID-19?

Is your organization discussing when to bring employees back to the office?

At this time, what time period are you anticipating starting to bring employees back in the office?

Other:

End May
We follow state guidance first; for now, the deadline is May 4, but we anticipate that being extended.
Essential Business so some working remotely and others on site. Looking to ramp up based upon State recommendations.
Still evaluating but looks to be Mid-May or June.
We will follow the instructions of the Governor of Massachusetts.
Some users are at office now in needed areas and being managed.
We have had a critical staff (10%) all along. Haven't decided, but I'm currently guessing June.
Varies by location. Our plan is to follow local regulations.
Multiple office locations and requirements so return will be staggered.
Stores in May, HQ in July
Partial starting in June
When Gov lifts stay at home orders
I am not aware of any specific timing being discussed.
We are global, so it is hard to tell.

Awaiting direction from state government.
Skeleton crew now
Depends on local government requirements but currently may be between mid-May or early June.

When you bring employees back to the office, what are you planning?
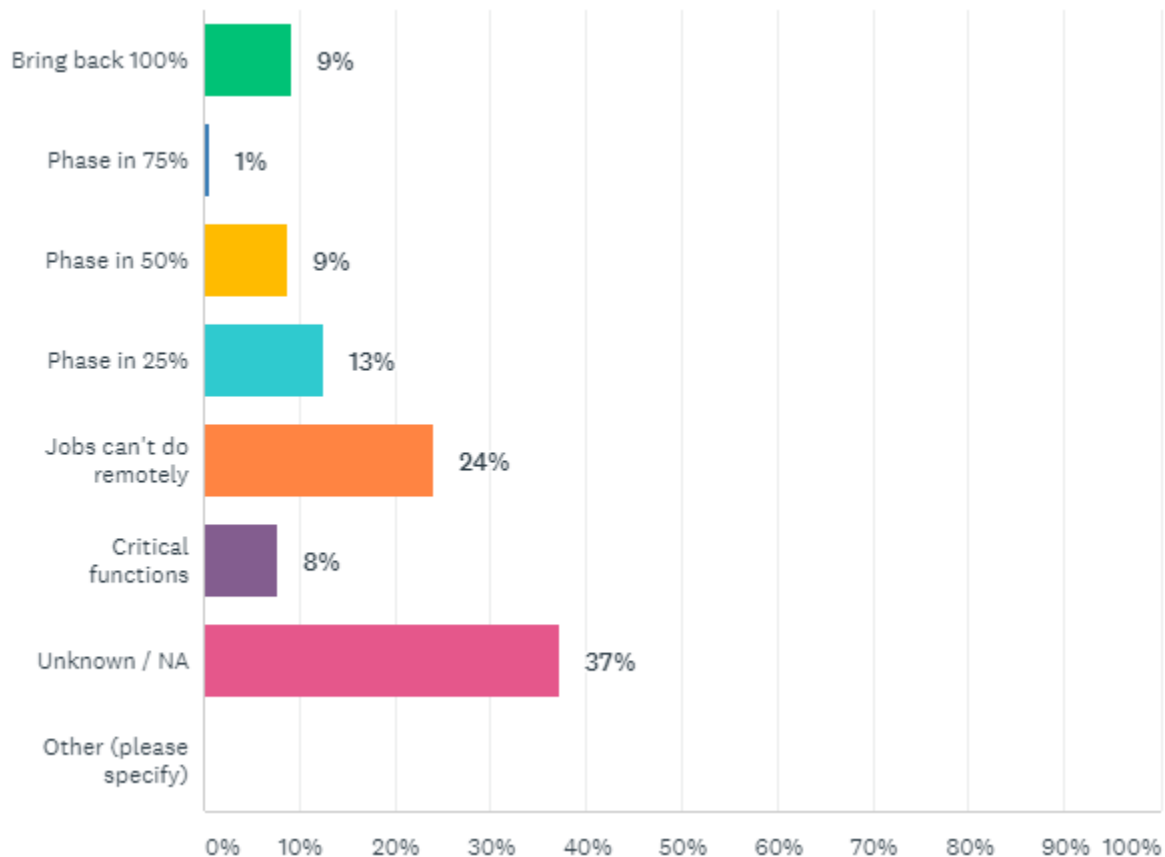
How long after peak would you wait to bring back employees to the office?

Bar chart:
- Immediately: 3%
- 1 week: 1%
- 2 weeks: 11%
- 1 month: 11%
- Unknown / NA: 58%
- Other (please specify): 16%
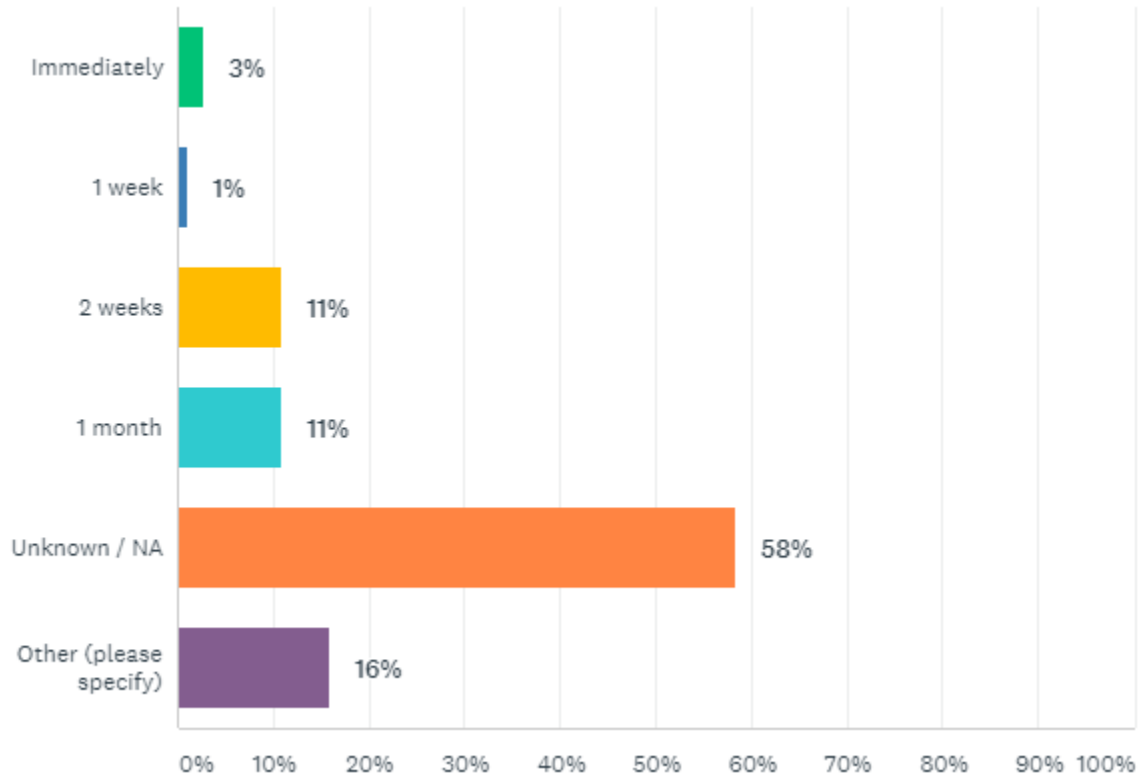
Other:

We're not in a hurry, plan to slow roll the return.
Once allowed by the state.
As determined based on situation and business needs.
Probably start 2-3 weeks and gradual phase in.
Still deciding process - will be phases of people in case of re-infection.
After the curves cross and the reopening surge curve shape is known.
2 to 4 weeks - still working on.
Per our governor's orders / state department of health guidelines.
We are working efficiently from home. There are no functions that we have found that cannot be completed remotely or with periodic short visits to the office by a select group of employees (i.e. mail pickup).
We will start bringing people back in 2 weeks as long we can provide social distant work areas.
Depends on state guidance/requirements.
Still to be determined
Varies according to local regulations
2-3 months
It depends on what the State allows

As appropriate
2 months; stores are our priority to get open
Based on expert guidance (e.g. CDC)
Depends on conditions not time
Not up to us as it would be a state government decision.
Unknown at this time
When Governor lifts stay at home orders.
Decisions are based on the Government directions.
Depends on government recommendations.
Still working details at several sites.
Not my decision
Undetermined
Using state and local guidelines with soft opening.

What triggers are you considering before bringing employees back to the office? (Check all that apply)
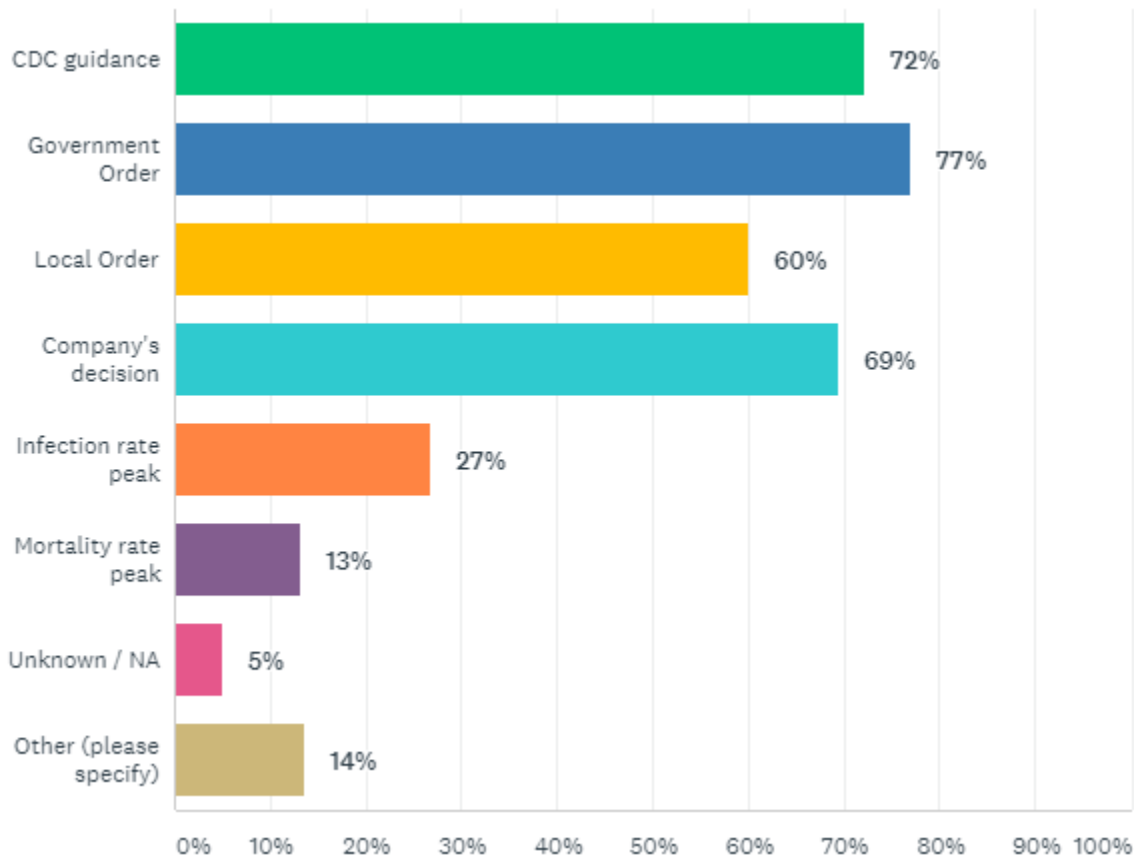
Other:

Supply chain
Business critical needs and status
State Government
Ability to provide service while social distancing.
Health Canada guidance
The longest of all the above plus some safety margin.
Time it takes to prepare for return.
Ability to continue productively working remotely.
Ability to continue social distancing practices at first in the workplace.
Availability of PPE (masks)
Maintaining social distance
We are looking for indicators that the spread is under control and that enough of the population has been tested to ensure the safety of our employees.
Risk factors to clients and volunteers in other areas, travel, etc.
Common sense

Access to testing and PPE.
NERC CIP Guide lines
Waiting for State to ease restrictions.
Critical business needs for specific employees.
Duration of school closure, also availability of day care.
Different locations require different triggers.
Media Panic
Governor's guidance is driving our planning.
Not up to IT to decide when employees return to the offices.

How important is the availability of masks and cleaning supplies in your decision to bring employees back to the office? 1=not important, 5=very important

4.1★ average rating

- 3% (1)
- 7% (2)
- ☆ 14% (3)
- 28% (4)
- 49% (5)

Legend: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
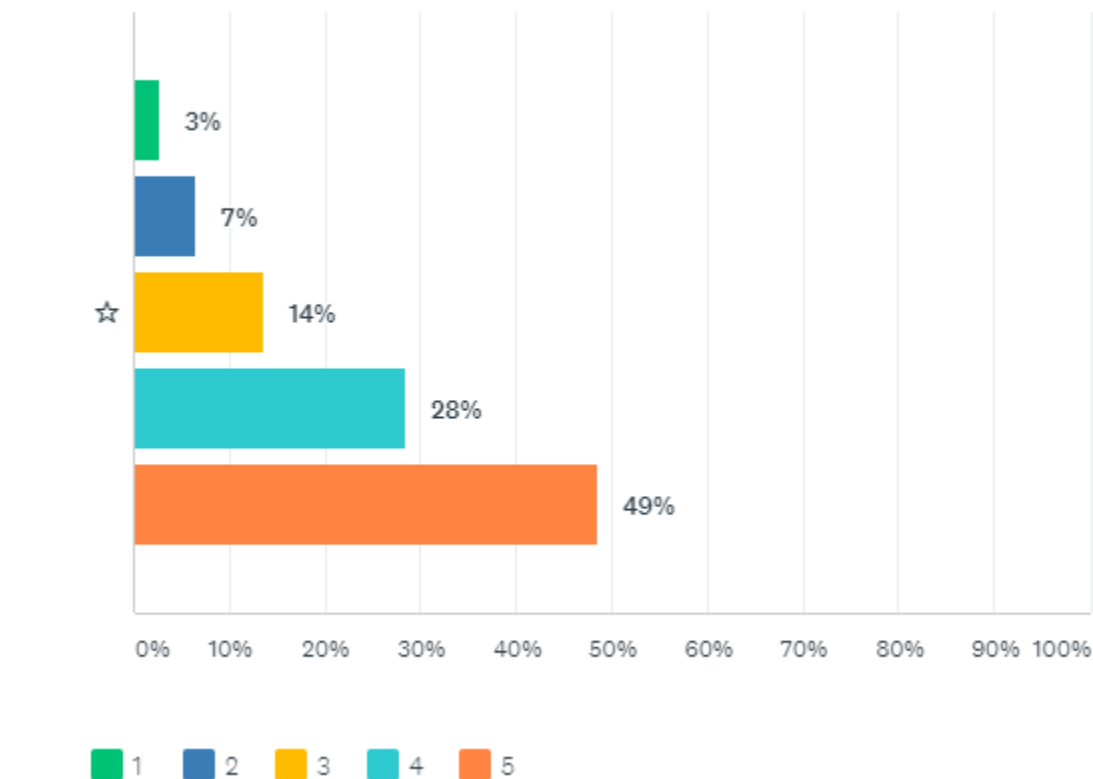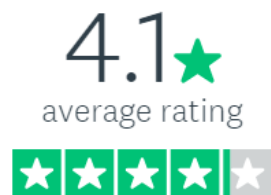
What are your organization's plans on bringing equipment back into the office? (Check all that apply)

Category	Percentage
No plans	11%
Disinfecting equipment	49%
Quarantine equipment	8%
Unknown / NA	37%
Comments	8%
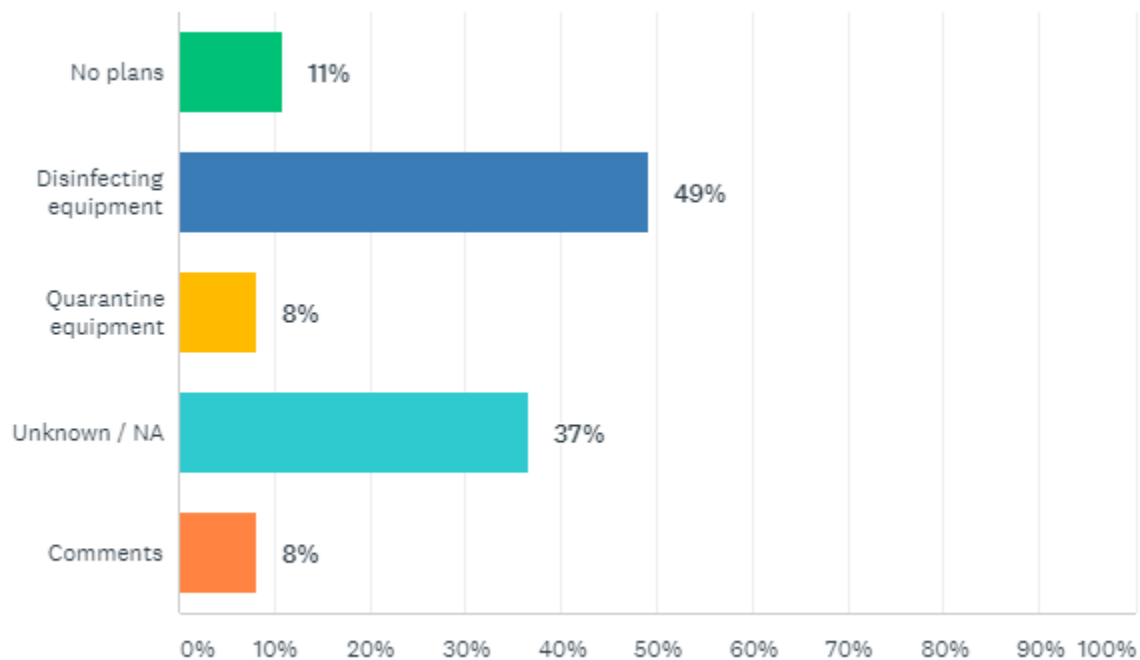
Comments:

All aspects under consideration
We only allowed laptops to go home
We will probably allow equipment to stay until further down the road in case a new peak begins.
Check-in to make sure all equipment comes back; make sure everything has remained patched and software up-to-date.
Still struggling with this one
We will probably just let employees keep the equipment, so they can work from home in the future.
We are very likely to disinfect equipment but we'll wait on recommendations on how to proceed.
Not much to bring back
Had not considered but good point
FYI only. Due to products we manufacture our company is "essential". As a result our mfg personnel (~65%) are working through this pandemic.
IDK Answers to most of these questions; IT not involved in the decision
If employee has been home with no infection contact their equipment will be considered safe but still get wiped down.
Phasing and needs vary by site

Honestly hadn't considered it, but want to understand it better. If people are coming in they are just going to touch it again anyway.
Equipment is individual use and would not be shared.

If there is a positive COVID-19 case in your office, how long have you or would you close that office to clean it?

1 day — 12%
2 days — 12%
3 days — 8%
1 week — 7%
2 weeks — 10%
Unknown / NA — 42%
Other (please specify) — 10%
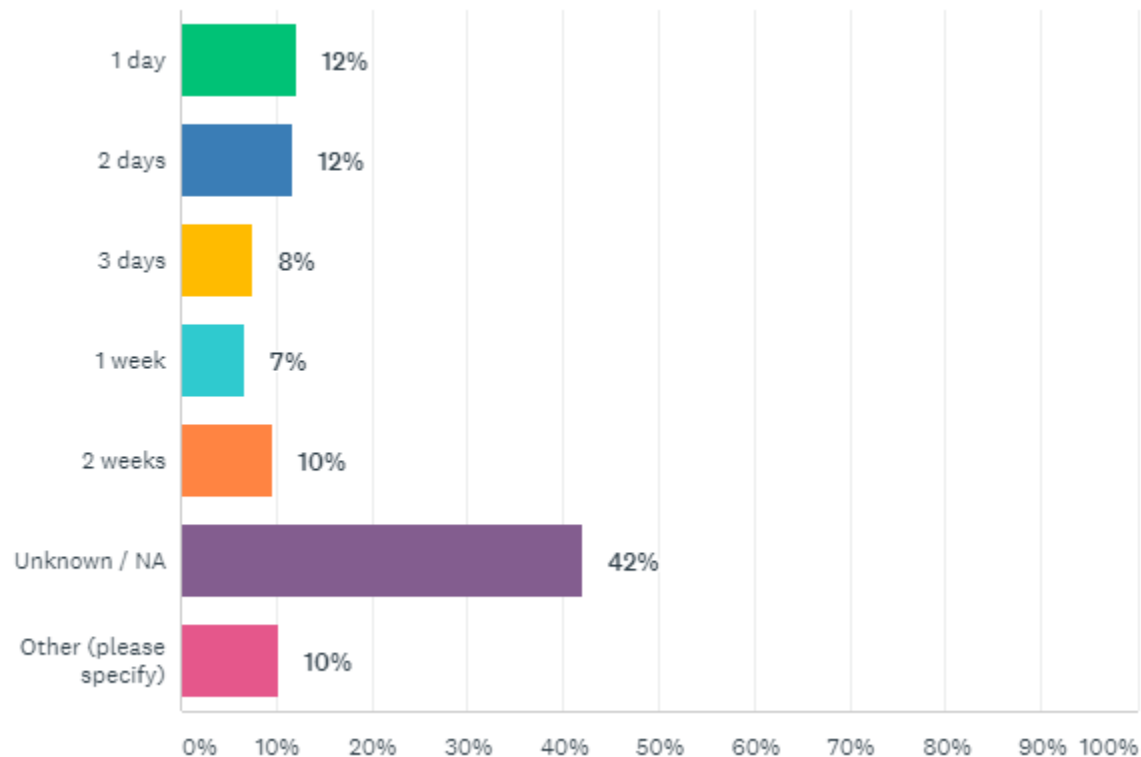
Other:

Situationally dependent.
It would depend on the circumstances
We have procedures in place if that happens; hasn't happened yet (keeping our fingers crossed!)
As per Gov't and CDC regulations
Had 1 positive case. Actions dependent on where the person worked within the organization.
Until it could be effectively sanitized
Offices closed - local order.
Case by Case basis
Would disinfect and possible close the affected areas, not the entire office or campus.

We had so far only one official case in an office. The office was closed for 2 days while being disinfected.
Until a certified cleaning company finished cleaning.
Isolation of those potentially exposed
We developed a "deep clean" same day process.
Would depend on the area
Office would be cleaned, anyone in office would be quarantined for 2 weeks. Office could reopen after cleaning was completed.
1 day in office, 0 days in plant
10 days
We had someone suspected but the office was already vacant. The cleaning occurred overnight.
Following guidelines
We would only close long enough for cleaning to take place.

What measures will you deploy when you bring employees back to the office?
(Check all that apply)

Measure	Percentage
No common touchpoints	11%
Clean common touchpoints	46%
Space workstations	29%
Move to other areas	22%
Masks and / or gloves required	39%
Temp taken before entering	35%
Unknown / NA	45%
Other (please specify)	16%
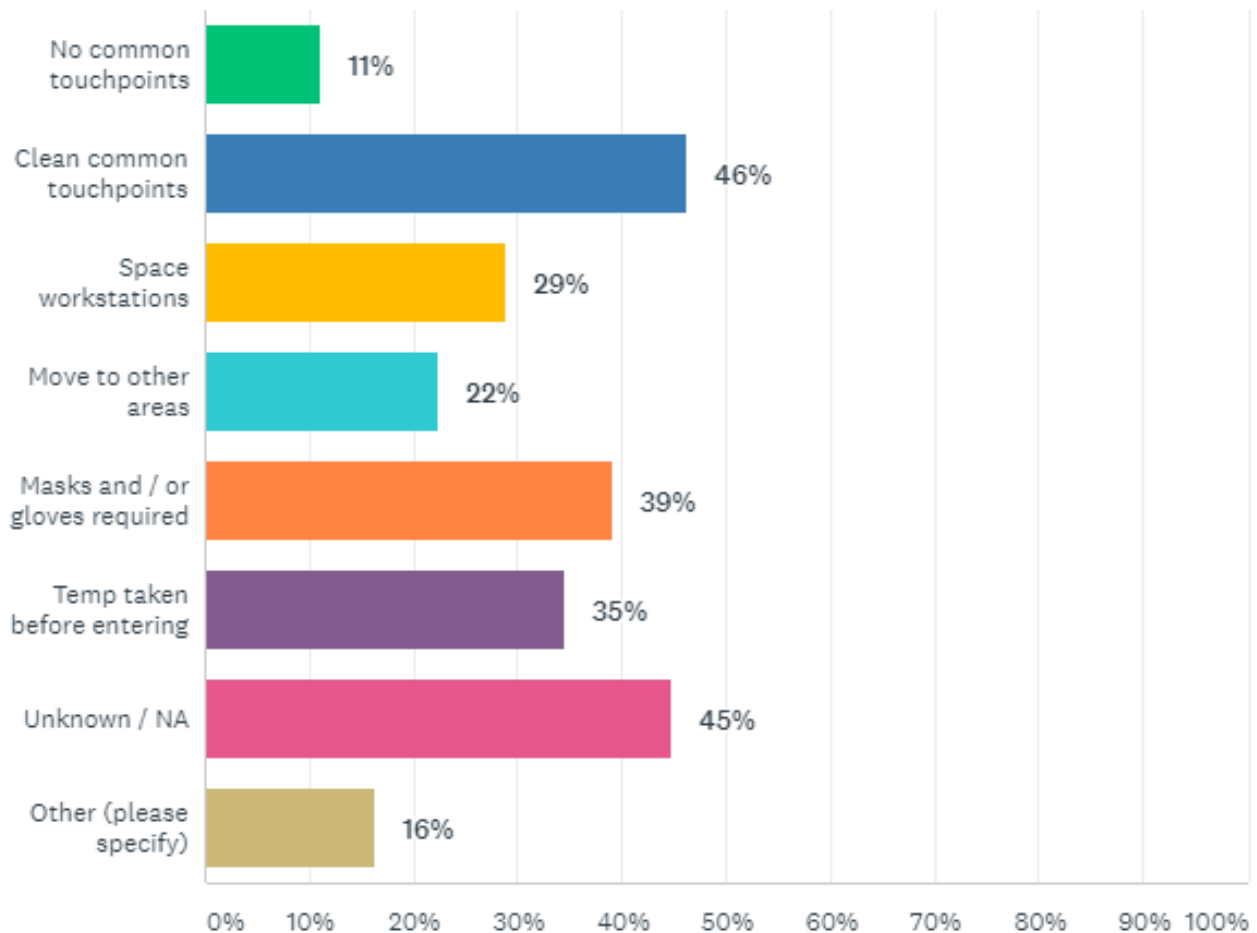
Other:

All of these are under consideration for use.
Currently have increase and modified cleaning practices which will continue. Other options being considered.
Maintain social distancing and personal hand washing
Limit large gatherings, maintain social distancing
Onsite temporary cleaning temp
Bring back two teams as separate teams on separate days. Critical individuals will continue to work from home for a while. Employees with child care issues may be allowed to continue to work from home.
No public transit
No group meetings in conference rooms - virtual meetings from within the office
Many things being discussed, little decided as of yet. IT is developing an application for Jail staff where they record temperature and query staff about COVID symptoms at start of every shift.

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Survey of health conditions or proximity to ill family member.
Preference it to keep employees working from home.
Rotations between work from home / in office to insure social distancing in offices.
Except for main entry door, all doors propped open.
Alternative working shifts as needed to keep social distancing.
Still developing plan and measures
We're considering rolling shifts
Not decided
Clean common surfaces at the end of each day.
Thermal camera screening
Staggered start times, lunches, breaks
Still being determined.
Ensure that not all members of a function are on site at same time.
Change traffic flow (stairs, coffee, restrooms, etc.)
Masks and daily temp checks for ALL employees. Ongoing cleaning of all areas due to food processing.
Limited conference room use
Social Distancing observed throughout the work place
Close down of common areas, printer areas, small conference rooms.
Employees stay in zones to limit contact
Different work activities dictate different measures
Regular cleaning of common services
Limiting chairs in conference rooms and encouraging Zoom meetings.
Employ some sort of distancing... too early to tell

What lessons have you learned or best practices have you implemented during the challenge of the pandemic?

Trust your teams, focus on successful outcomes. Over communicate.
Most office workers have had minimal impact working from home.
Renting laptops and not buying them.
Remote workers with critical positions in the office. Expanded VPN capacity to handle surge. Adjusted automations to handle furlough process.
More remote VPN bandwidth needed. Requirement to have TEXT Message based communication for furloughed employees that may have email deactivated.
There really is a lot of work staff can complete at home and we can still provide an adequate level of IT service by having limited staff on campus.
Maintain security standards and follow established procedures whenever possible. This is not a time to experiment with new ideas en masse.
We had a pandemic plan and have made some critical improvements given the learnings we've experienced.

I'm not sure these are "best practices", but this is what we do in terms a maintaining our connectedness. Providing channels for connecting, both on and off topic as it relates to the work of the organization. We are a fairly social organization, so this is an important factor to maintaining the culture. This is mostly done through Microsoft Teams daily, and Zoom for org wide meetings. We have a tri-weekly org wide gathering, and part of that includes some sort of breakout room socialization.

Very happy that all employees had laptops and VPN access.

Regular cleaning of touchpoints. Frequent handwashing. No in-person meetings.

We are offering classes remotely and all offices are also working remotely. We anticipate summer quarter will potentially also be entirely online, although the decision has not been finalized. We are making plans should fall quarter also need to be virtual.

Improved cleaning practices along with escalating telework of which will be a part of the work schedule based upon role moving forward.

Need more ability to provide mobile workstations to workforce for them to be more mobile and adjust next budget accordingly

Lesson learned - the office can operate very effectively being fully remote.

Technical preparation is vital

Implemented a daily work from home report showing accomplishments for the day and hours worked. This has helped show that employees are still productive and it has built confidence in work from home. Our culture has not been open to it in the past.

Following and continuously instill CDC guidelines, we can work as a remote workforce, learn to do things differently.

We implemented a remote workforce (work at home), no visitors on campus, virtual meetings, limited vendors on-site (re-schedule visit or canceling if appropriate), following KHDE guidance for food safety.

Larger supply of remote equipment-laptops, monitors. Training on VPN.

Still gathering lessons learned. Definitely no more desktops.

We can work remotely efficiently

Cleaning and social distancing

As much as people are comfortable using Facebook on their mobile phones, most people do not know how to use new technology without detailed instructions or assistance.

Best practices: Pay attention to scaling of remote environment.

Our Remote access performed well. People stepped up and adjusted to change quickly. We are operating near 100% effective, with a few minor delays with shipping quarantine aspects.

Stop printing, work to upgrade to larger screens at home, stronger home security.

We are planning on installing touchless temperature kiosks for return to work.

Act quickly and early based on facts that are presented.

Security is still Paramount

A lot from this survey!

Expanded remote work capabilities. The success of the remote work model will likely result in some more permanent expanded remote workforce model. Investments in digital signature, cloud call centers, and virtual desktop projects paid off in a quick transition allow thousands to work remotely.

Faculty and staff need a huge amount of training to keep up on technical skills.

Allowed employees to take office equipment and chairs home. Use of Microsoft Teams. Encouraging social interactions (coffee breaks, scavenger hunt, birthday parties, etc.)
We have learned that most members of the staff can work efficiently from home. We had a "Work from Home" policy in the works when this crisis hit. This has allowed us to test both the feasibility and effectiveness of working from home. We have been pleasantly surprised.
Remote work has been very positive and will be used much more. Most users can work remote. This will change the future of how we work moving ahead.
All Laptops was a lifesaver
That working from home actually works. The first few weeks saw no drop in productivity, and for some functions an increase.
Frequent communication helps to allay fears.
People have quickly learned new technologies, learning remote working can be productive, scalability should always be considered, people are learning they don't need all of the paper they thought they needed, etc.
Things that we put in place (VPN, O365) are really paying off right now.
Always be prepared, it's more than just having a BCDR.
Found that employees needed their extra monitors and ergonomic chairs once they had been working from home for a couple of weeks.
Everyone has a different tolerance to the anxiety of the situation and the rate of change required to provide safe working environments. This was not originally factored into the plan.
Most positions need laptops instead of desktops, so we have more flexibility in this type of situation for people to work remotely.
We have standing Sr. Leadership meetings each day to identify and anticipate employee issues. On a weekly basis, the entire site gets together to allow employees to ask questions. From an IT side, newly created dashboards allowing monitoring of critical infrastructure is reviewed daily.
Able to continue workflow while taking advantage telehealth and telecommuting opportunities.
Encourage more hand washing, use of masks, health form completion before entering office, expanded sick leave, rotation of field staff, halt non-essential infrastructure construction, 100% telecommute required.
VPN sufficiency
Various all associated with working from home
Planning - communication and staffing are key. Need to address concerns quickly and have on hand what you say you will have.
Many staff can work from home. IT had to scramble to: add more VPN licenses, moving existing or new computer equipment to homes. We want to add more workstation VMs (a project for this year) so employees could access network resources with a non-Company device.
Take business continuity planning/DR seriously, regularly revise, review and test. Having a plan gave us a foundation when everyone was panicking and flailing on how to respond.
Better goals / objectives for staff that can be measured.
We have been able to maintain a high level of functionality with staff working remotely.
More self-awareness and cleaning!

Use of PPE
Too many to name
Our users are capable of dealing with change when they are forced to. As a construction company, I never ever felt that the company would embrace work from home. But we are, and our users are loving it.
Many work from home best practices, improved business continuity measures that will be helpful in ongoing disaster planning. Best practices for biosecurity in all areas of our business.
You are never really ready.
Company able to all work remotely and still meet goals and exceed in lots of cases.
Ensure all staff have laptops and have tested VPN connectivity.
Disinfecting, temperature taking
Need to keep all teams practiced at working remotely and thinking through how primarily physical / in-office tasks will be completed in a remote posture.
Social distance, work from home, using social media and tools to remain connected.
All our major applications are SaaS or hosted browser based. It was easy for us to move employees to working from home even though we weren't required to.
Teleworking works
There is no such thing as a common approach. Each state and country, and some cases down to a municipality are handling things differently.
We have developed a safe work action manual and are implementing a return to work training plan. Our top management continues daily meetings to monitor the situation.
Always have internet circuits with large port capability so you can ramp up the bandwidth quickly. The need for laptops now outweigh the cost-effectiveness of desktops. Assemble one or more Task Force(s) to monitor external influences (government, CDC, etc.) to be abreast of quick-changing influences to your company. Never underestimate the capabilities of your IT Department. They make MAGIC happen! Never put safety and health ahead of profits. If you do, you will still lose in the long-run.
Ramping up implementation of Microsoft Teams was incredibly important.
Stay in communication with staff, partners, and vendors. Documenting preferred processes for remote access.
The importance of good communication in your organization and each department.
Try to mix in informal / social activities that still respect the distancing requirements; ensure every office and employee are prepared (connectivity, capacity, procedures, etc.) to work from home at any time; have a plan and process to onboard and offboard employees when you can't be with them physically.
VDI has been helpful
Report and trace
Improve Cleaning methods. Mandate staying home if not feeling well.
Communicate, then communicate again.
Using Microsoft Teams. Preparedness with home internet. VPN resilience.
Challenge: Having enough spare equipment for remote work and getting new equipment when needed. Best Practice: Practicing remote work in advance of a stay at home order.
Importance of have a good BC/DR plan

Should have considered a work from home setup years ago. Also standardizing on laptops over desktops would have also been better prep.

Remote worker procedures

Putting hand sanitary gel / lotion on either side of highly used doors. Custodial staff sanitizing office doors handles and handles generally on a daily basis. Socially distancing those essential office workers to areas where there are open workspaces but now they are WFH workers.

We were in pretty good shape for the large group of users working from home with no specific planning. We adjusted and scaled really well. Very proud of our IT group!

Fully unknown - do know hand sanitizers have been installed throughout offices and disinfecting wipes placed at copiers in offices. Most everyone working from home except for active job construction sites and residential apt communities we manage.

Keep calm, this will pass.

Increase ISP bandwidth speed and make sure handful of people without a laptop have a loaner laptop provided to them within the 48 hours. Setup intranet page with latest updates Send micro emails instead of one email with lot of info. Have a manual for computer hardware setup with detailed pictures. Extended IT support hours - 6am - 8pm. Web conferencing solutions with user manual.

Keep communicating

Employee safety is number one.

Communicate clearly and often - Share WHY something is changing or required now

No big lessons. I think we've improved our work-from-home capabilities and employees have had to learn to work in ways that are different than normal.

Your business continuity plan needs to cover items like this pandemic.

Technologies such as VPN and collaboration tools matter a lot.

Moving to a laptop centric organization. Potentially moving to student loan model for students as well. Multiple failback options for technology access has been critical for success.

VPN isn't stable

Glad we had tested our business continuity plans and beefed up the network capacity & infrastructure.

Better VPN, use of Teams cloud software. WebEx.

Our daily cross-functional Crisis Management meetings have helped us get ahead of things and not sit and wait. We been agile and the daily meetings for the past 4 weeks have kept all areas of the organization stay "in the know". True teamwork as things are moving and changing so quickly. It is not a time for ego or top-down dictatorship, it is a time to focus on keeping people safe while feeding people.

How to work better remotely & electronically

Remote work is more possible than thought.

Work at home best practices and remote technology

Physical barriers placed when area doesn't allow proper distancing (pack line)

Need a business continuity plan in place. Some employees are still required to be in the workplace, so cleaning often.

We are moving from desktop machines to laptops for everyone. They'll still have large monitors, keyboards and mice.
More employees have the ability to work remotely than we had realized. But communication becomes much more of a challenge, and is hard to keep up that "team" atmosphere.
Implemented Zoom to get everyone communicating better
Lots
It's amazing what you can do on short notice when you have to. Take care of your people first and foremost.
Daily video conferences to keep teams focused.
Facilities are cleaned daily and remote workforce becomes the preferred method of working. Focus changed to accelerating collaboration platforms, enhancing remote security, and changing processes to become location independent.
Remote access that can be ramped quickly. Replace software that prevents use remotely, especially software that uses hardware protection.
Work remotely if possible, physical separation, cleaning common surfaces and touch points several times per day. Wear masks and gloves when possible.
Too many questions
Technology is key to successful telecommuting, being empathetic.
Remote workforce. Digitization.
Staff overly dependent on company equipment in their home environment. Many did not even have home internet, which was a huge surprise to me. We had to provide hardware and internet services for some staff.
We are able to work from home
We have one person constantly cleaning common touchpoints all day. We have reorganized employees in our production area to increase the distance between them. We have doors to common areas open at all times. We can run the business with the majority of employees at home. Before we were worried about space constraints at our office and that is no longer a concern.
We were well prepared to isolate on short notice.
Don't be too proactive as we can't dictate / control direction on issues / challenges. Constant communication and real actions are needed to develop and maintain trust.
Social distancing is effective and should be gradually relaxed. More stringent cleaning SOPs will be implemented.
We didn't have a good remote work solution for our contact center. Had to pull something together in a hurry.
More staff can effectively work remote than originally anticipated. Could lead to organizational shift as it pertains to thinking through remote work options for staff.
Don't rush things, Listen to expert guidance, and help to manage anxiety caused by uncertainty through increased communication.
Increase in virtual meetings, electronic signatures, virtual desktops, cloud storage
Moving to WFH wasn't as hard as expected.
Rewriting the rules on who can work from home.
Work from home strategies
Still learning

Working without paper is possible.
Ability of employees to work effectively from home. Plan for the future of possible repeat type event
It's easier to work from home than folks thought
You need a backup of your primary web conferencing solution in case there are issues. Professional staff can effectively work remotely so we need to rethink our work from the office policy going forward. Communication from the top is critical during these situations because everyone is remote.
Be sure our VPN routers have the capacity for a surge in demand.
It lasted longer than expected and I would have given companies more equipment. Additional laptops etc.
Be responsible and use common sense.
Several best practices around using communications technology.
Be ready
We are more productive remote in almost every case. Look at continuing some remote work. Employee engagement to learn technology was record high and when there is the right incentive (like a job) they can learn and appreciate anything.
We have had incredible success at recruiting local businesses and citizen volunteers to retool and make / provide the resources we need and can't find... i.e. sanitizer, masks, etc.
Experienced intermittent remote workforce makes the transition smooth.
Lesson learned - we can do a lot while remote.
Our cloud first and "work from anywhere" strategy that we started in 2014 has proven a smart route to go. Most business functions have been largely unaffected because you are not required to be in an office to work. R&D and specialized lab work has been affected as there is specialized equipment, e.g., clean rooms, to continue to work.
"Designated Survivor" - we had one of our team stay at home from the beginning of March before the state mandated quarantine was in place. He did not go to any branches or interact with any employees. He also voluntarily isolated.   - Moved everyone to Microsoft Teams and OneDrive   - Teams chat was the historical record of all directives, process changes, etc. It was full searchable and allowed personnel to get up to speed if they were added to a Team   - Implemented faster firewall and VPN   - We've always been good at disinfecting keyboards and phones but we taught the rest of the company.   - Remote support via VNC on computers wherever possible. Even if the person is only 10 feet away.   - Gloves when touching someone else's computer.   - Phones for key executives were forwarded to their cellphones on a schedule. After hours, the voicemails were set as emails so the person could grab them the next morning.   - Zoom Meetings were held in individual offices - even if the offices were a few steps away from each other.   - Set up call center to intercept all phone calls for 20 locations. 4 people answered the phones (our best membership people) and they worked in shifts from remote locations.

| They had a shared mailbox of all voicemails that were left when someone missed the call so that anyone could answer it. |
| We learned that we were pretty well-prepared to work from home in many cases. |